



Kentucky Department of Parks News Release

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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'My Old Kentucky Home' in Bardstown Undergoing Renovation Great Pains Will Be Taken to Make Sure Work is Historically Accurate

FRANKFORT, Ky. – The Federal Hill home at My Old Kentucky Home State Park in Bardstown, Ky., is undergoing major renovations in 2006 in an effort that combines science with art.

Federal Hill is a Kentucky icon, having appeared on both the state's quarter and a state stamp. Guests come from all over the world to see it, particularly during Kentucky Derby time.

The Georgian-style mansion, which is said to have inspired Stephen Foster's famous ballad, My Old Kentucky Home, was last renovated in 1977. Millions of people have visited the home since then -- so it is badly in need of attention, according to Alice Heaton, the park's manager.

A private foundation is funding the work.

When the project is complete, visitors will likely see the walls covered with bolder colors and more patterns. Draperies, carpets and wall and floor coverings will be added. Some furniture will be replaced or repaired. Past interpretations have made the home more muted than it really should have been, says Heaton, who has managed the park for the past two decades.

The emphasis this time is on historic authenticity, Heaton said. "Our guests are very knowledgeable," she said. "So it's extremely important, for us to document everything we do to preserve My Old Kentucky Home -- not only for Bardstown, but for Kentucky, the nation, and the world."

For example, Matthew Mosca, an expert on paint analysis who has worked on George Washington's Mt. Vernon home and many others in Kentucky and throughout the country, has visited Bardstown, examining many layers of paint. Mosca captured core samples throughout the house, including from hard-to-reach locations such as in corners and behind fireplaces.

Mosca took these samples back to his offices in Baltimore where he analyzed them further under a microscope and by chemical processes before making final recommendations. Mosca also examined old photographs of the home. While the photos do not capture the home's original decor, they did provide some important clues as to what it might have looked like.

As a result of his research, Mosca believes many of the home's walls were originally covered by wallpaper. Therefore, the renovation will include papering the walls with historically appropriate patterns. Of course, such patterns aren't readily available at

the local home improvement store. Instead, they have to be painstakingly recreated through the old wooden block process.

The end result will be a dramatic departure from the way the home has been interpreted in the past, but will make it more historically accurate, according to Mosca. "The world before the introduction of electricity was very different from our world," Mosca explained. "Whenever people had the opportunity to impact the environment around them they tended to want to enliven it with colors and patterns to create something more stimulating. Our approach today is exactly the opposite. We tend to use monochromatic color schemes because we have so much stimulation from the outside world. Usually it comes as a surprise to guests of a historic home to find out how much color and how many patterns were used."

If you can't wait to see what My Old Kentucky Home might look like, then you could take a trip to the Waveland State Historic Site in Lexington, Ky., for a sort of sneak preview of the finished product.

Mosca also took part in the recent renovation of Waveland. Although the project took a number of years to complete because of a scarcity of some materials, the end result transformed the building from somewhat stuffy to a lively piece of history, according to Park Manager Ron Langdon.

Guests have warmly welcomed the changes. "When people walk into Waveland they see what the home might have looked like when the original family, the Bryan family, (which had ties to Daniel Boone) moved in," Langdon said. "We want to show them what it could have looked like when it was brand new."

Like Waveland, My Old Kentucky Home will be open throughout the renovation. In fact, Heaton hopes to increase interest in the project by hosting workshops on some of the processes going on there, such as wood graining.

Interpretive panels will highlight the work for visitors as it advances. Ongoing renovations are always crowd pleasers.

"It's going to be extremely exciting from an educational perspective," Heaton said.

"Anyone who cares about historic structures or who is interested in renovation will have a whole new reason to come to My Old Kentucky Home."

No one knows for certain when the work at My Old Kentucky Home will be done.

Parks officials, however, say it should be finished well before the home marks its historic 200th anniversary in 2008.

The Kentucky State Park System is composed of 52 state parks plus an interstate park shared with Virginia. The Department of Parks, an agency of the Commerce Cabinet, operates 17 resort parks with lodges -- more than any other state. Each year, Kentucky parks draw 7 million visitors and contribute \$317 million to the economy. For more information on Kentucky parks, visit our Web site at <http://www.parks.ky.gov>